

REMARKS

Applicants thank the Examiner for the thorough examination of claims 1 – 36 that are currently pending. In response to the Office Action dated July 6, 2004, Applicants have amended claims 12, 25, 33, 34 and 36.

The Rejection of Claims 12 and 25 under 35 U.S.C. § 112, Second Paragraph

Claims 12 and 25 have been rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 112, second paragraph as being indefinite. Accordingly, claims 12 and 25 have been amended, and the Examiner is respectfully requested to withdraw the rejection.

The Objection to Claim 36

The Examiner objected to claim 36 as being a substantial duplicate of claim 35. Accordingly, claim 36 has been amended to depend from claim 14. It is respectfully submitted that the objection has been overcome.

The Rejection of Claims 1-36 under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a)

Claims 1-36 have been rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as being unpatentable over U.S. Patent No. 4,405,435 (Tateishi et al.) in view of Pub. No. 2-152251; IDS Paper 6 Document (Mikio Takagi). The Applicants respectfully traverse the rejection.

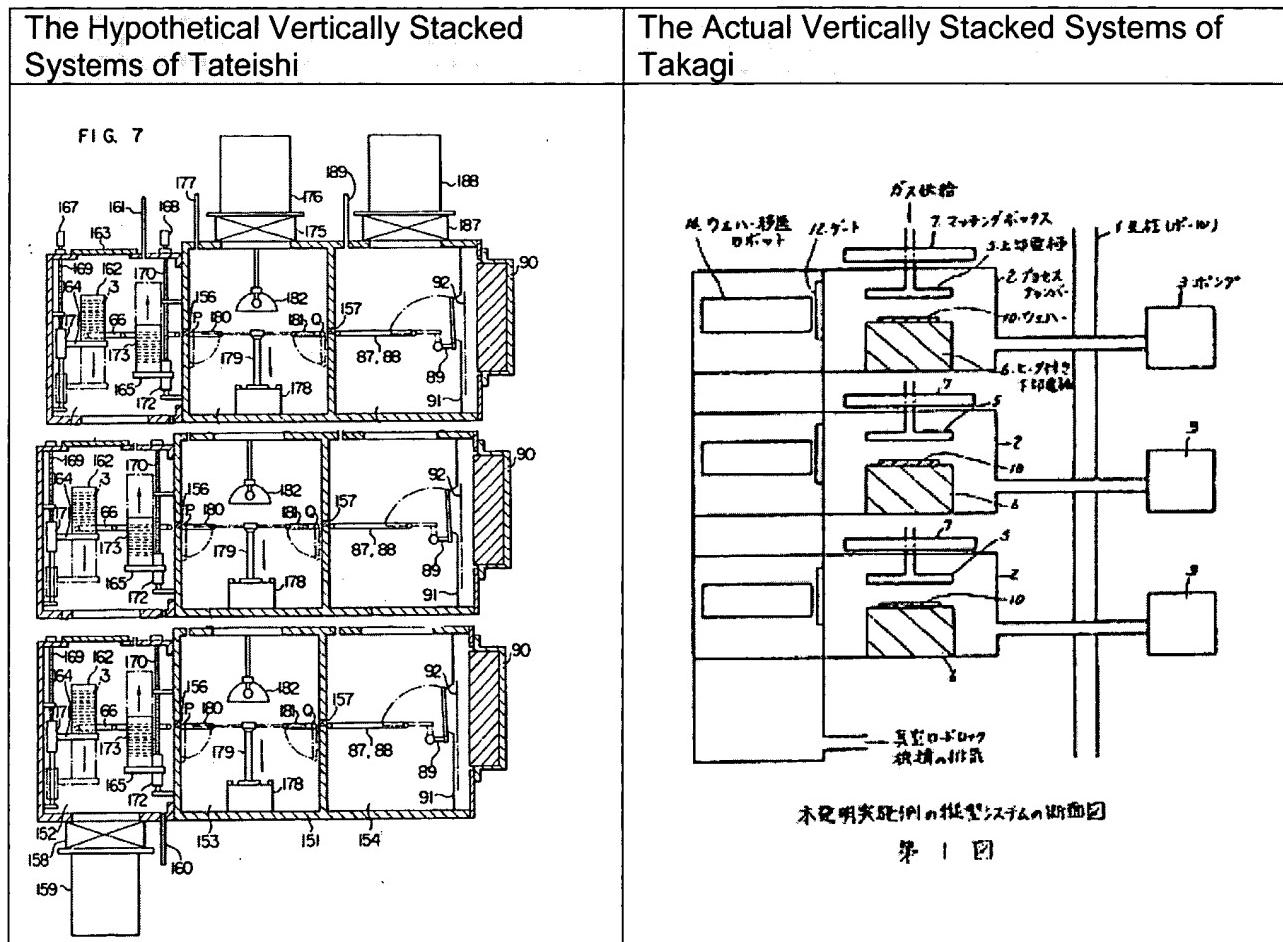
The Examiner previously issued a final rejection of claims 1-36 under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as being unpatentable over Tateishi in view of Takagi. The prior final rejection is described in the Office Action dated July 1, 2003. More specifically, the Examiner

previously rejected the claims over ***the embodiment disclosed in Fig. 4 of Tateishi*** in view of Takagi. Applicants appealed the final rejection, and they filed an Appeal Brief on April 29, 2004. In view of the Appeal Brief, the final rejection was withdrawn, and a new rejection was made in the Office Action dated July 6, 2004. Claims 1-36 have been newly rejected over ***the embodiment disclosed in Fig. 7 of Tateishi*** in view of Takagi. The Applicants respectfully traverse this new rejection.

The new rejection is based upon the Examiner's belief that, "It would have been obvious to one of ordinary skill in the art at the time the invention was made to reproduce Tateishi's module (Fig. 7), . . . where the plurality of modules are piled up in a substantially vertical direction." (See page 20 of the Office Action). Allegedly, the motivation for piling up the modules is provided in the Takagi reference. The Applicants respectfully disagree.

The Applicants respectfully submit that one skilled in the art would not be motivated by the Takagi reference to *detachably attach or mount the modules of Fig. 7 to the wall of a substrate transfer section having a common first substrate transfer device*, as required by independent claims 1, 14. Instead, it is respectfully submitted that the Takagi reference would motivate one skilled in the art to simply stack the modules of Fig. 7, one on top of the other, as illustrated below in the hypothetical combination of Tateishi in view of Takagi. The hypothetical combination includes *three substrate transfer sections having three substrate transfer devices, instead of a substrate transfer station having a common first substrate transfer station*.

THE HYPOTHETICAL COMBINATION OF TATEISHI AND TAKAGI



device, as claimed by the Applicants in independent claims 1and 14. Moreover, the hypothetical combination would include three first substrate transfer devices instead of a common first substrate transfer device claimed by the Applicants. Accordingly, the Examiner is respectfully requested to withdraw the rejection under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a), and to pass the present case to issue.

CONCLUSION

All objections and rejections raised in the Office Action having been addressed, it is respectfully submitted that the present application is in condition for allowance and such allowance is respectfully solicited. Should there be any outstanding matters that need to be resolved in the present application, the Examiner is respectfully requested to contact Richard J. McGrath (Reg. No. 29,195), to conduct an interview in an effort to expedite prosecution in connection with the present application.

Pursuant to 37 C.F.R. §§ 1.17 and 1.136(a), Applicant(s) respectfully petition(s) for a three (3) month extension of time for filing a reply in connection with the present application, and the required fee of \$1020.00 is attached hereto.

If necessary, the Commissioner is hereby authorized in this, concurrent, and future replies, to charge payment or credit any overpayment to Deposit Account No. 02-2448 for

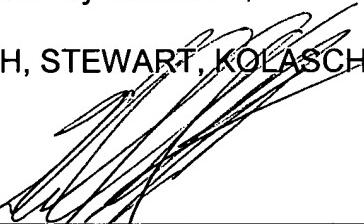
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any additional fees required under 37 C.F.R. §§ 1.16 or 1.17; particularly, extension of time fees.

Respectfully submitted,

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